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ONE OF OUR HEROES

You ladies and you laundrymaids
Who wait on wind and sky,
To give their so capricious aids
To crown your industry.
Now lend your ears to hear a woe
That even you can hardly know.

Where England's manhood in the mud
With cheerfulness abides,
Such deeds are done as stir the blood,
And humbler tasks besides—
As his who rinses, rubs, and wrings
The captain's shirts and socks and things.

Those clothes the captain wants to wear
He washes underground,
But needs must hang them in the air
His dug-out's door around,
And pray the dubious clouds that they
Will neither weep nor clear away.

For should their sheltering veil remove,
Anon he swears to hear
A humming menace far above
Which means an eye is there,
A hostile eye that must not see
Pyjamas prancing in a tree.

So, agonised, he stands about,
And, if the clouds grow thin,
The raiment that he hurried out
He wildly snatches in.
Lest "undies" in the glare of day
Should give a happy home away.

Now, gentle ladies, read of "shows"
And try to understand;
But also give a thought to those
Who in this miry land,
In spite alike of rain and sun
Contrive to get the washing done.

W. K. H.

-From The Queen, London.